



Spencer Butte Challenge Course

City of Eugene • River House Outdoor Program • 301 North Adams Street • Phone: (541) 682-5329 • Fax: (541) 682-6319

CONTACT INFORMATION for Youth Groups, Page 1

As the Contact person for your group's Challenge Course day, you are the 'gatekeeper' of information. It is essential that you talk with the Challenge Course Lead Facilitator prior to your course day to exchange information. Also, your group's experience will be greatly enhanced if the participants know how they can best prepare for the experience. The following information is provided to assist you in both endeavors. Thank you for your time and energy in making the Challenge Course an opportunity for your group!

Information every Contact should know:

- **Roles and Responsibilities** - The most successful Challenge Course days happen when representatives from each agency (yours and ours) forge a partnership, working together for the benefit of the youth. To that end, clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the adults on site is helpful.
 - **Challenge Course Staff** - Simply put, our staff are there to expertly facilitate your group through the Challenge Course. Our focus is ensuring the safety of the individuals and group.
 - **Your Adult Support Network** - We recommend having at least two adults accompany the group (more for larger groups) including you, the Contact. Adults may participate with the group (for the same fee as youth) or stay out of the process. The choice to have adults participate with the youth is best made with the group's goals in mind. Some rationales for adults to participate include wanting them to bond as part of the team, or to serve as role models. Other groups find having youth participate on their own to be the best choice. Please ask the Lead Facilitator if you have questions about whether adults accompanying your group should participate or not.

Occasionally, individuals in a group require more personal attention than our staff can provide while still attending to the rest of the group. Perhaps a participant is behaving in a consistently unsafe or disrespectful manner or (s)he simply needs time away from the group. In those instances, you and your adult support network must provide the one-on-one connection needed to adequately support the individual. As much as possible Challenge Course Staff will try to encourage the group to be self-monitoring when issues arise. If your group has strategies in place for addressing behavioral issues, please advise the Lead Facilitator prior to your day what approach to take. If a participant requires one-on-one adult attention or removal from the group, the Contact person is accountable for undertaking these responsibilities.

- **Weather Policy** - The Challenge Course can be run in most kinds of weather. However, some groups will cancel their day if foul weather is forecast. The choice to go forward with a scheduled course on a cold or rainy day is largely up to YOU, the Contact*. You may cancel your Challenge Course day based on weather up to the day before without financial repercussions. If you decide to do the day despite inclement weather, it is our expectation that your group will come prepared. Appropriate clothing is a must! If participants are not adequately dressed and our staff must call off the day because of it, you will be billed for the entire day. However, if participants do come prepared and the weather worsens forcing a shortened day, arrangements can be made to either adjust the bill or re-schedule for another half day. The main point is if you choose to do the day, participants must come prepared!

*Examples of weather where Challenge Course staff would cancel the day: forecast of pouring rain all day, high winds, thunder and lightning storms.

- **Arrival Time** - Challenge Course days are usually very full with little time to spare. Please plan to have your group arrive at the Challenge Course ten minutes earlier than the scheduled start time. This will allow participants a chance to get oriented to the area, and give our staff time to collect and look over Liability and Health Forms.



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- ***Liability and Health Forms*** - One completed form for each participant must be handed in to Challenge Course staff upon arrival. It saves time if you collect forms in advance and hand them in all together. **If a minor does not hand in a form signed by their parent or guardian, they will not be allowed to participate.**
- ***Valuables*** - The Participant Preparation form addresses what items to bring to the Challenge Course. What it does not cover is what NOT to bring - please do not bring anything of significant value. The Spencer Butte parking lot is not secure. Vehicles that have items of value in sight are often burglarized. We do have a semi-secure spot for small items such as purses or wallets up on the Challenge Course. However, the City of Eugene is not responsible for lost or stolen goods. Play it safe - leave valuables at home!

Information the Lead Facilitator will want to know:

- ***Who is your group*** - The Lead Facilitator will ask a variety of questions related to the group's background. For example, how long have they been together? What is their purpose for being together? Have they been to the Challenge Course before? Are there particular issues dominating the group? Also, is there a specific theme or group culture that you would like integrated into the day? If there is a specific curriculum that you would like integrated into the day, written information explaining it would be helpful to facilitators.
- ***Who are the individuals?*** - For safety purposes, it is important that the Lead Facilitator know in advance about individuals who have disabilities, medical histories, developmental or emotional issues that may impact the group's process. You should be aware that individuals with a current heart condition, history of heart disease or seizure are at particular risk of a medical incident on the high events and may not be allowed to climb. We strongly recommend you address this with pertinent group members prior to the course day in order to prevent unexpected disappointment.
- ***What are the group's goals and expectations for the day?*** - Goals can be very broad (team building) or very specific (improve communication skills). We recommend talking with group members to identify what they want to achieve at the Challenge Course. Some things to consider when thinking about your goals are:
 - Think in terms of outcomes: At the end of the day, when the group is walking off of the Challenge Course, what do you want them to be thinking, feeling or to have learned?
 - If you have many goals, the group may only scratch the surface on all of them. If you have only a few, the group can go deeper into each.
 - In terms of activities, how physical or non-physical a day do you want?
 - Do you have expectations about doing specific activities or elements (the physical structures) on the Challenge Course?

Information every Contact should share with their group:

- ***Plan for the day*** - Be sure the participants know the basics: time to meet, transportation plan, what they need to bring, what time it will be finished, etc.



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- ***Nervousness is natural*** - In every group that comes to the Challenge Course there are members who are reluctant or very nervous about the impending experience. Being nervous is natural. In fact, it's one of the reasons this kind of training can be so successful. People out of their comfort zones are typically more aware of what is going on around them, which promotes increased engagement in the learning process. The more informed participants are about the experience, the more likely they are to want to take part.
- ***Let them know what to expect on the day*** - You can add to your group's learning by having a discussion with them preceding the day. Try to find out what their expectations are for the day. Have any of them have been on the Challenge Course before? If so, what was it like for them? You could also talk about the goals you've set forth for the group, the types of challenges they might experience, or safety on the Challenge Course. For example:
 - ***Goals*** - At the Challenge Course we'll be practicing working together as a team. What do you think that might look like or feel like? or Can you think of examples of high performing teams? What characteristics makes them so?
 - ***Challenges*** - This day will be a lot of fun, and you will experience many different types of challenges. Some might be physical, like climbing a ladder or walking across some cables. Some might be cognitive, like decoding a puzzle. Some might be emotional, like trusting your peers to guide you blindfolded through a maze. Most will be socially challenging, requiring everyone to work together in order to be successful. What challenges do you think our group will face when it comes to working as a team? or What do you think you can do to help our group succeed?
 - ***Safety*** - The Challenge Course has many types of safety systems designed to keep us safe while participating. For example, when we're up on the high elements we'll be wearing harnesses and helmets. It will be important for us to help the facilitators keep things safe within our group. What are some examples of unsafe behavior? What about safe behavior? What can we do to help keep things safe?
- ***Let them know what not to expect on the day*** - For example:
 - ***The Challenge Course is not Disneyland*** - It WILL be a lot of fun, but it won't be like going to an amusement park.
 - ***It's not forced*** - Challenge by choice means participants choose their level of involvement. You don't have to do anything you don't choose to do. That doesn't mean not participating in the activities altogether. It means working with the group to find ways to stay engaged that don't involve doing whatever it is one chooses not to do.

In summary:

This information sheet is provided to help you prepare your group for their Challenge Course experience. It answers some of the most frequently asked questions about bringing a group to the Challenge Course. However, if you, a participant or a parent have any other questions or concerns, do not hesitate to call us at 682-6324 or e-mail Robert.J.Brack@ci.eugene.or.us